

**Amendments to the Claims:**

1. (Previously Presented) A mounting bracket for securing a plank to a joist, said mounting bracket comprising: a continuous piece of structural material of a predetermined length wherein the cross-section of said mounting bracket is curved or angled, said mounting bracket further comprising:

a planar, solid separating flange portion;

a joist-fastening flange portion connected to said separating flange portion, which is approximately perpendicular to said separating flange portion, said joist-fastening flange portion having a hole therein for receiving a fastener for fastening said mounting bracket to the joist;

a support flange portion connected to said joist-fastening flange portion, said support flange portion having an access hole therein wherein said access hole is aligned with said joist fastening hole; and

a planar plank-fastening flange portion connected to said support flange portion, said planar plank-fastening flange portion having a hole therein for receiving a fastener for fastening said mounting bracket to the plank and wherein said separating flange portion, said joist fastening flange portion, said support flange portion and said plank-fastening flange portion transition uninterrupted one into another to form said mounting bracket.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Previously Presented) The mounting bracket of claim 1, wherein said joist-fastening flange portion extends from said separating flange portion at an angle of approximately 90°.

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Previously Presented) The mounting bracket of claim 1 wherein said separating flange portion and said plank-fastening flange portion are substantially co-planar.

7. (Previously Presented) The mounting bracket of claim 1 wherein said support flange portion extends from said joist-fastening flange portion at an angle of approximately 35 degrees.

8. (Previously Presented) A mounting bracket assembly for mounting a plank to a joist, comprising:

a planar, solid separating flange portion for placement between the plank and the joist; a joist-securing flange portion adjacent said separating flange portion, wherein said joist-securing flange portion is capable of being secured to the joist; a support flange portion adjacent said joist-securing flange portion, said support flange portion having an access hole therein wherein said access hole is aligned with a joist fastening hole; and, a planar plank-securing flange portion supported by said support flange portion, wherein said plank-securing flange portion is capable of being secured to the plank.

9. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 8 further comprising a fastener for securing said joist-securing flange portion to said joist.

10. (Original) The assembly of claim 9 wherein said securing means is selected from the group consisting of a screw, a nail or a bolt.

11. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 8 further comprising a fastener for securing said plank-securing flange portion to said plank.

12. (Original) The assembly of claim 11 wherein said securing means is selected from the group consisting of a screw, a nail or a bolt.

13. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 8 further comprising a spacer portion between said plank-securing flange portion and said support flange portion.

14. (Original) The assembly of claim 13 wherein said spacer portion is curved.

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Previously Presented) The mounting bracket of claim 1, wherein one or more weep holes are provided.

19. (Currently Amended) The mounting bracket of claim 18 wherein said weep holes are located at the ~~intersection~~ connection of said joist fastening flange portion and said support flange portion.

20. (Previously Presented) The mounting bracket of claim 1, wherein said mounting bracket is affixed to the side surface of said joist and the bottom surface of said plank.

21. (Previously Presented) The mounting bracket of claim 1 wherein said structural material is selected from the group consisting of steel, aluminum, plastic or any other structural material.

22. (New) A method of securing a plank to a joist comprising the steps of:

providing a mounting bracket comprising: a continuous piece of structural material of a predetermined length wherein the cross-section of said mounting bracket is curved or angled, said mounting bracket further comprising:

a planar, solid separating flange portion;

a joist-fastening flange portion connected to said separating flange portion, which is approximately perpendicular to said separating flange portion, said joist-fastening flange portion having a hole therein for receiving a fastener for fastening said mounting bracket to the joist wherein said fasteners comprises an elongated fastening portion and a flange portion;

a support flange portion connected to said joist-fastening flange portion, said support flange portion having an access hole therein wherein said access hole is aligned with said joist fastening hole; and

a planar plank-fastening flange portion connected to said support flange portion, said planar plank-fastening flange portion having a hole therein for receiving a fastener for fastening said mounting bracket to the plank wherein said fastener comprises an elongated fastening portion and a flange portion; and wherein said separating flange portion, said joist fastening flange portion, said support flange portion and said plank-fastening flange portion transition uninterrupted one into another to form said mounting bracket;

attaching said mounting bracket to said joist by passing the elongated fastening portion of said fastener through the joist-fastening hole such that the joist-fastening portion of said mounting bracket is secured between said joist and the flange portion of said fastener and attaching said mounting bracket to said plank by passing the elongated fastening portion of said fastener through the plank-fastening hole such that the plank-fastening flange of said mounting bracket is secured between the bottom surface of the plank and the flange portion of the fastener.